

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
maintained by the
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
and supported by the
CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY WILDLIFE TASK GROUP
Database Version 8.1 (2005)

B550 Cordilleran Flycatcher *Empidonax occidentalis*
Family: Tyrannidae Order: Passeriformes Class: Aves

Written by: T. Kucera

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

Former western flycatcher recently split into cordilleran flycatcher (*E. difficilis*), which breeds in transmontane California chiefly in the Warner Mts. area, and Pacific-slope flycatcher, which occurs in cismontane California (American Ornithologists' Union 1989). Contact zone between the two species is at Shovel Creek, Ikes Creek, and Little Shasta River, Siskiyou Co (Johnson 1980). Cordilleran flycatcher breeds in eastside pine, white fir, and lodgepole pine habitats in the Warner Mts. and vicinity, and may breed in White Mts. and on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada near Mono Lake and Mammoth Lakes, although breeding status in California is uncertain (Gaines 1988, Small 1994). Little is known of its migrational timing or distribution (Small 1994).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Probably similar to Pacific-slope flycatcher, which mostly eat flying insects; usually hawk from a perch, sometimes glean from foliage. Occasionally eat berries and seeds (Bent 1942)

Cover: Nest at higher elevations than do Pacific-slope flycatchers (Small 1994). Breeding habitat provided by cooler, denser boreal forests of pine, fir, and spruce.

Reproduction: Nest often built in crotch of tree, on cliff ledge or lava outcrop, in old building, or on other human-made structure (Small 1994).

Water: Probably similar to the Pacific-slope flycatcher, which is closely tied for breeding to riparian or moist areas, usually near water, throughout the state.

Pattern: Frequent higher-elevation pine, fir, and spruce forests with dense canopy during breeding season. Little is known of habitats during migration (Small 1994).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Little is known of timing of migration (Small 1994). Probably arrives on breeding range in mid or late May and remains until September (Johnson 1973).

Home Range: No data found. Density of *E. difficilis* per 40 ha (100 ac) recorded as: 5-28 in a Colorado conifer forest (Beaver and Baldwin 1975), 11 males in a broadleaf evergreen forest in Alameda Co. (Cogswell 1973), 35 males in a California buckeye/California bay mixed forest in Marin Co. (Stewart 1973a).

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: The closely related *E. difficilis* nest from May to August with peak activity in June. Nest solitarily. Lay 2-5 eggs; average 3-4. May raise 2 broods per yr. Incubation 14-15 days, by female; altricial young fledge at 14-18 days (Harrison 1978).

Niche: Eggs and nestlings preyed upon by small mammals and snakes. Adults may be taken by accipiters.

Comments: Recent species split based upon range separation, vocalization and genetic differences (American Ornithologists' Union 1989). Other differences in requirements and life history not yet documented.

REFERENCES

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1989. Thirty-seventh supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list of North American birds. *Auk* 106:532-538.
- Beaver, D. L., and P. H. Baldwin. 1975. Ecological overlap and the problem of competition and sympatry in the western and Hammond's flycatchers. *Condor* 77:1-13.
- Bent, A. C. 1942. Life histories of North American flycatchers, larks, swallows, and their allies. U.S. Natl. Mus. Bull. 179. 555pp.
- Cogswell, H. L. 1973. Broadleaf evergreen forest with shrub-filled openings. Pages 992-993 in W. T. Van Velzen, ed. Thirty-seventh breeding bird census. *Am. Birds* 27:955-1019.
- Gaines, D. 1988. Birds of Yosemite and the east slope. Artemisia Press, Lee Vining, Calif.
- Harrison, C. 1978. A field guide to the nests, eggs and nestlings of north American birds. W. Collins Sons and Co., Cleveland, OH. 416pp.
- Johnson, N. K. 1973. Spring migration of the western flycatcher, with notes on seasonal changes in sex and age ratios. *Bird-Banding* 44:205-220.
- Johnson, N. K. 1980. Character variation and evolution of sibling species in the *Empidonax difficilis-flavescens* complex (Aves:Tyrannidae). Univ. Calif. Publications in Zoology 112:i-151.
- Small, A. 1994. California birds: their status and distribution. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, CA.
- Stewart, R. M. 1973. Oak-California bay-buckeye-mixed forest. Pages 995-996 in W. T. Van Velzen, ed. Thirty-seventh breeding bird census. *Am. Birds* 27:955-1019.